

March 10, 2022

Connecticut General Assembly, Public Health Committee
Legislative Office Building, Room 3000
Hartford, CT 06106

Testimony *Regarding* Raised House Bill 5364, An Act Concerning the Tobacco Settlement Trust Fund

As the tobacco program coordinator at Southern CT State University, I provide tobacco prevention, cessation to youth and young adults. I support community members at Southern, other colleges in the state and middle and high schools in CT. This work has been grant funded through CT Department of Public Health and the tobacco and health trust fund for the last 5 years. We have had meaningful impact at Southern and across the state because of this funding.

I oversee a peer to peer vaping prevention program where Southern undergraduates teach middle and high school students about the risks of vaping. To date, we have reached 21 schools and over 300 teenagers in CT. After each session, students are surveyed about their experiences with nicotine vaping. Including student respondents that do not vape, 34% said nicotine vaping makes it hard to pay attention and difficult to concentrate at school. Twenty percent do not want to use the bathroom at school due to those vaping in the bathrooms. About half of the students said that flavors are one of the main reasons that their peer started to vape. Flavors is the overall theme we see when talking with young students. Our youth are enticed by the variety of palatable flavors and develop misconceptions of risk from the great taste.

This grant funded work, has enabled me to provide vaping prevention and cessation education at over 90 community events reaching over 1500 participants. Requests for nicotine vaping education come mainly from colleges, middle and high schools, and prevention organizations. Vaping is a major concern for those that work with youth and young adults. Over the last 5 years, I have seen an increased knowledge of risk, but there are still a lot of misconceptions. Our youth deserve to know the truth about these products so they can make an informed decision for themselves.

Principals I speak with are exhausted from trying to enforce a vape free school. Many schools confiscate multiple devices each day. Some districts have students as young as 5th grade caught vaping. Again, the products they see are flavored.

As a tobacco treatment specialist, I provide cessation services mainly at Southern. All of the students I have worked with, reported using flavored nicotine vaping products. They were unaware of the amount of nicotine in the products and the level of harm they could cause. Wanting to improve their health was their top reason for wanting to quit. They can already feel what vaping has done to their mind and body over just a couple of years.

This grant funded work, has provided the opportunity to assist four colleges in CT to implement Tobacco and vape free policies on their campus. Albertus Magnus College, Wesleyan University, Northwestern CT Community College, and Sacred Heart University have all partnered up with Southern to implement comprehensive policies in order to address the growing concern of vaping on their campus.

Programs like this as well as other tobacco prevention programs have the potential to reduce nicotine vaping rates for our kids and young adults. Our kids deserve to live a nicotine free life.

Thank you,

Sincerely,

Victoria Adams, M.Ed, NCTTP
Tobacco Program Coordinator,
Southern Connecticut State University